

## **CAPTAIN FLETCHER TELLS THE STORY OF THE 113TH FIELD ARTILLERY**

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Among recent valuable acquisitions of the North Carolina Historical Commission is the History of the Hundred and Thirteenth Field Artillery, by the Historical Committee of that regiment, a beautifully printed and illustrated volume of two hundred and sixty-two pages. The volume presents the history proper and several appendices, giving a facsimile of The Tar Baby, sketches of each company and battery, an appreciation of the regiment by their French adviser, Lieutenant Jacques J. L. Poppelin, Carrying on About Carrying On, by George Graham, and interesting personal and statistical information. The Roster of the 113th F. A. by States, counties and foreign countries is of particular historical value. Though the work is the result of intelligent and enthusiastic co-operation among the several members of the committee and of the regiment in general, the animated, convincing style of its narrative is due to the talent of Captain A. L. Fletcher of Raleigh, chief historian of the regiment, and commander of the Supply Company from the start to very near the finish of the organization.

The One Hundred and Thirteenth Field Artillery began as a strictly North Carolina organization, and though the fortune of replacements brought into the regiment men from every state in the Union, and from several foreign countries, it always remained by preponderating majority a North Carolina regiment. It was a part of the 55th F. A. Brigade of the Old Hickory (30th) Division. But it so happened that the artillery brigade of the 30th Division was sent to St. Mihiel and the Argonne, while the infantry was sent to co-operate with the British. The result is that an Old Hickory organization took part in every major engagement of the 1918 campaign after July of 1918.

When at last in the summer of 1917 North Carolina was informed that a regiment of light field artillery would be accepted from North Carolina, Captain Wiley C. Rodman of Washington, received the first recruit on June 13, to what was known at that time as the First North Carolina Light Field Artillery. On July 13, the regiment was completely organized and under the command of Albert L. Cox, newly commissioned Colonel. On July 25, the regiment assembled by batteries at the call of the President; on August 5, it was formally drafted into the Federal service, and September 16, 1917, it became the 113th Field Artillery of the newly-formed 30th Division.

Every trade and profession was represented in the regiment, and the personnel was superb, but it was an artillery regiment in name only; not even the Colonel had received artillery training. The enlisted and officer personnel were for the most part infantrymen where they had any experience at all.

The winter of 1917-1918 is remembered as terrific by everyone, particularly by those men who lived in the tented camps of the (for that time) frozen South. Camp Sevier at Greenville was a typical newly-built, mud swamped, frozen proving ground of endurance and discipline. Here the 113th F. A. cleared away the forest to make a camp and a parade ground, improvised wooden guns and instruments for drill, and boned up theory around their sputtering Sibley stoves. Drills, schools, mud, cold, sickness, death, profanity, joking, marked the course of training thru which they went. Some resigned positions of responsibility too great for them, some fell by the way, some rose to higher position during this time, until May, 1918, saw the regiment intact for the most part, inured to hardship and discipline, ready for France.

Great Britain took them across the water in the converted freighter, Armagh. The voyage was marked by seasickness and disgust at the English ration of mutton. One boy remarked that the 113th wouldn't be worth a damn in the navy, and all the boys dissented from the English opinion of mutton, which it seems they had every day. The total impression of England itself, it seems, was disagreeable, though the scenes around Winchester were lovely, and the regiment was glad to cross the Channel, get out of La Havre and get into Brittany to Camp de Coetquidan, to learn some real artillery work with real artillery.